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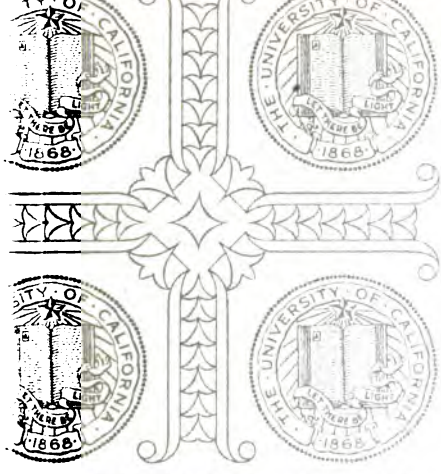
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THE TOWN OF THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER

ETCHINGS BY
E. T. HURLEY
TEXT BY
E. R. KELLOGG

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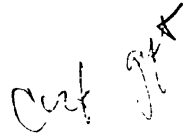

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These pictures and these lines are a tribute to the city which has been called the Queen City of the West, the Beautiful City and, not least, the Contented City,— the flower of that valley called by the early French settlers La Belle Riviere which is only another version of the Indian name, Ohio.

The pictures have been a labor of love through many years of study and are records made in fugitive hours taken from art work of another sort.

Mr. Hurley, in time as methodically applied as that of any business man, has created those dream landscapes for which Rookwood is best loved by many people. But his sense of the beauty of the actual scenes which lie about him in his native town — peculiarly rich and varied in material — has kept his tireless energies forever on the stretch to explore and to revisit them in all kinds of weather and to set down his impressions.

In his house is a workshop subject to invasion by a particularly live small boy and to reconstruction by a wife as artistic as himself. Here, on high days and holidays and on what is left of working days, with appetite as keen as though he had not already feasted off pencil and brushes galore he paints, he prints, he models, he contrives. His innumerable etchings of Cincinnati and the region near it are the most noteworthy output of his studio, but the whole tale would not be told if we made no mention of occasional freaks of creation as boyish as a kaleidoscope, — as exotic as a life sized elephant.

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Beloved City, dowered with river and hill,
Golden with sunshine, silvered with snow,
Jewel of Nature in a gracious mood,
Strong outpost in the early wilderness,
Dear refuge of the wanderer on our shores,
Cross roads of North and South, of East and West;
How do thy children love thee!

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What wonder that thy solemn woodlands dim,
Whispering sheltered calm and breathing peace,
Halted the footsteps of the pioneer!

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What wonder that within the deep ravines
Along those streams that call the sunshine down
Through flickering boughs to gild their fruitful banks,
Safe there among the birds all jubilant
The pioneer turned happy husbandman.

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Rejoice, O hills, rich in your radiant crops
Of ruddy fruit and fields of ripening grain:
Caught in the rhythm of the summer winds
You dance through sparkling seas of summer sun.
And O, ye brooding orchards, murmur still
The story of that solitary soul,—
That wanderer, with a gentle madness touched
Who years gone by laid your first seeds in earth
And nurtured your young growth.

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While all the land rejoices and gives thanks
Shall we forget to bless the patient hands
Whose untaught labor learned to build the broad
And sure foundation which we rest upon?

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O, happy householder, embowered in trees
For whom the valley opens like a scroll
Of shining beauty and for whom the mesh
Of highways like a fine strong net flung wide
Draws the world daily to your very doors;
Will you forget those homeless ones who blazed
Into the trackless wilderness a trail,
Stumbling ahead of your well-guarded feet?

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Yet, for those wanderers too the great highway
Which still we tread stretched on into the west
Between the beckoning hills,—then, as today!

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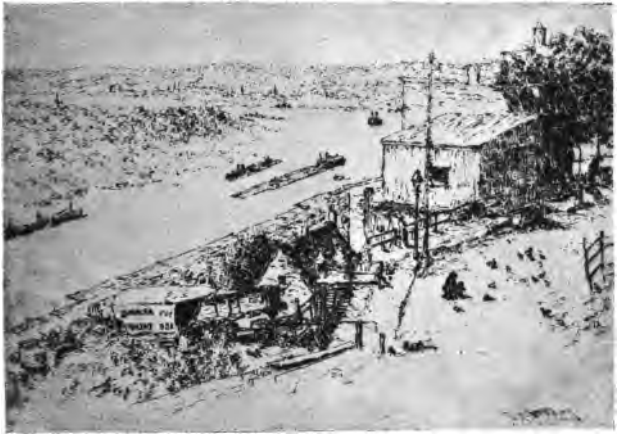

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Hail, mighty stream! What measures have you trod
Of solemn awe, of pastoral delight,
What stately manors have you hailed afar,
What human drift cradled upon your heart
Has heard you crooning softly in the night,
Ere to that diapason of great sound,
That orchestra of wide contrasting tones—
The City's voice, your lyric note you joined!

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Sing still for us the visions that were yours
In solitude: the vaporous forms and tints
That still elude us yet still draw us on
Like teasing melodies half heard, yet sweet—
How heavenly sweet!

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Not dreams alone but rugged harmonies
Intone,—exultant chords of daily toil,
Man beside man with elemental force
Contending, that a giant tool be forged.

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So that our hearts shall leap and sing aloud
To some high triumph as to martial strains.

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O, mighty river, you it was who taught
Our fathers, through the twisted streets to lead
This docile sister stream which silently
Bore on its patient breast the city's load.

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Or rippled to its merry making bands;

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Which shared its dim mysterious hidden life
Or dreamed beside its nodding industries.

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Now turn we to the heights; first to that one
Where all the little houses tiptoe crowd
To gaze upon the city veiled in smoke
Rearing aloft her crown of radiant hills,
Spangled at night with myriad twinkling lamps,—
The tawny river coiled about her feet.

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Quaint little streets that clamber in and out,
What frolics have you sheltered and, at eve,
What sacred thoughts of happy homecoming!

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What weary wayfarers,—O, little shrine—
Have taken heart again beside the calm
Of your most precious grief!

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And you, steep thoroughfare of steps devout,
What crowding hosts have gone your way toward heaven!

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How many vowed anew their gift to joy
Here, where the lovers of the earth have met
To tell the world how beautiful she is!

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City, thy gates are full of swift surprise;

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Of sturdy monuments of use and power;

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Of quaint suggestion of a time gone by;

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Of immemorial toil;

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Of dear repose;

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Of all the common lot of brimming life
That we may see and feel and share at will.

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Fresh life's amid the city's squalid want—
Growing toward the light,

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And still amid the tangle and the din
And burden of the daily fight for bread
The mighty heart of man beats on and on
Pulsing with pity and with sacrifice.

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O, city of my birth and of my heart
Whether the storm and night o'ershadow thee,

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Or sunshine, or the mantle of the snow
Dower thee with fresh charm and splendors new,

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Still let me know thine ever-varied forms
Of quaint and pure delight! Still let me feel
The folk about me, each in his own way,
Like our close clustered towers of many creeds
That from the turmoil lift their spires aloft,
Yearning toward the light—seeking the sky!

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